A Humanist Programme

THE PLAIN VIEW

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What the plain view perceives is neither obvious nor obscure

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COMMENTARY

A HUMANIST VIEW OF THE WORLD. The conference which is announced elsewhere in these pages is a first attempt to focus contemporary thinking on definite humanist concepts, and to develop a consensus amongst those who are alienated from Christianity and refractory to institutional religion. A humanist consensus must mean a developed alternative, on the one hand, to individualism, and, on the other hand, to historical religion; for it claims the authority of reason and of conscience in appealing to the individual to participate in realizing a public ideal of human life, and at the same time it defines itself in assumptions, descriptions, and prescriptions which differ essentially from those of any of the historic religions.

The word academic nowadays (not without reason) is a term of devastating abuse, liable to kill stone-dead all interest in the object at which it is aimed. A first glance at the topics of this conference may provoke the use of this terrible word, but the reader may reasonably be asked to reflect for a moment. After all, those who are most apt to reach for this word (like the character in the Nazi play who exclaims: "When I hear the word culture, I release the safety catch on my Browning") are those who have made up their minds that politics is all, or love, or literature, or nature, or history, or science. This way of making one's peace with a disintegrated, miscellaneous world is a great deal better than none, but its touchiness is a symptom that shows it is not real health, symptom of a need, the need to find a satisfying way of putting things together again. It is a total, concrete synthesis, a social synthesis, which is needed; not merely a theoretic synthesis, a philosophy, a world encyclopaedia of scientific orthodoxy. Social policies are already tending to bring about a social synthesis, in the sense of an application of the sciences and arts to human living. All the more urgent reason for a resolute attempt to understand how to bring into dynamic interaction the interdependent elements and factors which govern creative action and experience. For it is in the fruitful interaction of interdependent elements that our human life is to be understood and managed, and promises immense results; and it has been by abstractions and distortions which ignore this essential character of our life that waste, frustration, and catastrophe have taken more than due toll of human endeavour.

Thus there are themes which demand serious, protracted, and repeated thought and discussion and expansion to prepare us for creative entry into a new cultural order. This conference makes a beginning with some of these themes in their most general aspect. A first attempt is necessarily tentative, and it will be for later occasions, having a review of the results, to get nearer the mark.

WHAT THINK YE OF MARX? Rationalist thought in the 18th and 19th centuries was firmly allied to radical politics, an alliance hardly less close than that of Marxist thought in our day and Communist politics. If modern Rationalism continues the campaign against a ghostly remnant of church authority and is cool or hesitant about Socialism, does

that mean that it is a damp squib, and that the explosive force and the succession is with Marxism? At any rate, Marxism is far more important in the modern world than is Christianity. It is in our time what Christianity was in the early middle ages. Then what does modern Rationalism think of it? Would that question if it were pressed destroy the movement or give it a new *raison d'etre*?

It would be a damaging criticism against Rationalists if there were grounds for the suspicion that Marxism is widely accepted amongst them: by some, tolerantly; by some, eagerly; by a few, theatrically; by none, seriously. For the living principle of Marxist thought is the unity of thought and action, and not to take that seriously, not to be a revolutionary, is to kill it; it is like being a Christian humanist. Of course, Marxism, like Christianity, whether or not it survives as a living discipline, has already achieved a lasting influence; and in that sense we are all Marxists nowadays, as we are all Christians. And, of course, the war has been a Marxist revolution on a world scale, to the extent that the issue of the class struggle has been resolved by the war and its outcome in most of the countries of Europe, and there are few countries in which it remains the essence of politics to force that issue. To this extent, Marxism has no more future than Christianity. But it can never be a mere theorem: its modernity, its purposefulness, its scientific mastery, its philosophical audacity, cry out for replacement. That is the challenge to humanist thought: to bring out an instrument of thought and action which offers to do more with human life in the world than Marxism can achieve. Such a programme can ignore Christianity but not Marxism. A critique of Marxism has become a duty to civilization, for it is a power in the modern world which, in situations in which it cannot be constructive, threatens to be appallingly destructive. To furnish this critique is an obligation which should rouse the rationalist conscience if it is not obsessed by the fear of ghosts.

AFTER CAESAR. It has been the historical duty of radicals to expose the fallacy of the conception of society as an organism, a conception which it is hard to kill and which it must always be dangerous to let flourish. But the Benthamite correction of this fallacy is itself no better than a half-truth. When institutions and established interests and procedures are destroyed by revolution or defeat in war, it is very like the rending of tissues in the manner of its threat to human life. And the moment by moment reassertion of the healthy organism in its integrity against the micro-organisms which swarm within it and threaten at any moment to dominate and poison it with their excretia is very like the stable equilibrium of the state so long as it keeps in their obscurity the swarm of opportunists who would dominate, multiply, and destroy. In dealing with society, one is after all dealing with nature, and nature is not to be replaced by ideas or plans, nor by individual interests. Hence the long, difficult, anxious business of healing a sick society; and six years of unparalleled destruction have made the world a hospital, filled not merely with broken men and women, but with broken societies, which is infinitely more serious.

Without long-established organized interests (and they can be of many kinds) and familiar and accepted procedures, there is hardly the basis of society, still less the basis of democracy: there is a happy hunting ground for adventurers and fanatics, the "armed bohemian" and the "armed intellectual," Napoleon III. and Hitler. Even a Bismarck, if he saves his country from such a situation whilst he rules, leaves it to that fate when he goes. In such a state of society, only the principles of Machiavelli can save the well-disposed from despair; and that is to look for remedies which may easily prove worse than the disease. Thus the destruction of any long-established organized interest is a very serious matter, as Burke saw in the French Revolution. The years of French history since he wrote have not proved him wrong in principle. The conservative has his philosophical and historical justification, and there is no argument or accusation from the other side which can take it away from him.

By far the most stable, responsible, organic element in modern society is the trade union, and the political future of our sick societies can best be judged by the character, unity, and programme of their trade union movements. Although the most advanced and best-equiped trade union movement in the world did not save Germany from the hands of opportunists, there were extenuating circumstances, and it is not likely to happen quite in the same way again. There was, anyhow, no other organized interest which could have saved the nation. The very sickness of societies to-day multiplies the number of predatory persons preparing to seize the opportunity of making a spoils system; like the multiplication of micro-organisms in a sick body. The resistance of the body depends upon the established organized interests: first of all, the trade unions; and not to be despised, in some countries, the churches.

One estate. Until recent times English social life moved in three defined orbits and there was a minimum of mobility between them. As a result of social policies which are taking shape and of which there are more to come, these orbits are properly orbits no more; the steady social forces which sustained them are no longer operative. There is taking place in principle an assimilation to common standards, common social values, a common style of life. In all classes these changes are focussed on the family, which can no longer be a closed self-dependent unit, because, with the emancipation of women, children, and labour, bourgeois ideals have been discredited, and, still more, because events have brought home the need of the closest social co-operation. This immense displacement of tradition in three fields, even if it is not to be regretted, is not clear gain. It may involve heavy loss if we do not think closely about the kind of social ideal towards which we want to move. Is it safe or sensible to leave it to the outcome of piecemeal legislation? Anthropologists have warned us about what happens in the mission fields, and we need not be too superior to apply their lessons in our own case.

Do we think of it as a levelling up and a levelling down to middle-class ways and ideals? The middle-class house, a mansion in miniature,

is a model to remind us of the bourgeois ideal: it aimed beyond itself at the social independence of the upper class, and with each increment of income acquired more of the character of that class. Here if anywhere there is clear need of renovation, a radical replacement of ideals. It may be unsuitable for many reasons to attempt to raise working class standards and expectations to those of the middle class, but the clinching reason should be the destitution of the middle-class ideal. Do we know what we are about? We must begin with a critical revaluation of that ideal. We are all in the melting-pot. Social salvation is not salvation of the working class; it is the achievement of a common humanity in our way of life.

For all that, probably the best approach is through the tremendous and supremely important task of educating the masses in the use of the instruments of living: the use of a house, the understanding of nutrition and of the biological aspects of the family, partnership with the schools, clinics, and other specialists in the upbringing of children, the use of communal institutions and services which contribute to the mastery and enjoyment of life. This kind of education begins in the schools, but it is influenced by any and every social transaction; and it is the responsibility of those who are well versed in these elements (perhaps without knowing it) to help those who are not. In any case so much of the knowledge and so many of the social instruments are new (and improvements will continue) that social co-operation in the mastery and use of them will create a new way of life with its own standards and possibilities. It is the creation of a new culture, not the admission of the many within the precincts of the old. That is the touchstone of policy.

THE NEXT THIRTY YEARS

IF the Ethical Movement survives to celebrate a centenary in 1976, its remnant will merely commemorate the past with no outlook upon the future unless in the meantime, in the next thirty years, the movement has remade itself in answer to the needs of our time. A movement which represents a type of thought which is found in every civilization in every age and yet has no continuous historical tradition is justified by flexibility. The day before yesterday is an oblivious moment of history which bears no sanctifying memories. Therefore the present leaders of the Ethical Movement have to ask themselves whether after two generations of work, now that the original leaders are dead, there is any further use for the movement, whether its idea is still relevant in the contemporary field of religion or of social policy. An honest answer must be founded upon a study of what has been happening in these fields during these two generations.

There is more than a difference in degree between a generation once-removed from Christian piety and church-going and a generation twice-removed: it is a difference in kind. The alienation of an intellectual minority does not undermine institutional religion; it remains

a social institution and the alienated minority are, many of them, ready and anxious to find an interpretation that will salvage the tradition and the institution. That was the position of men like Matthew Arnold and Seeley and Leslie Stephen. But when the social basis disintegrates, when "the never-to-be-shaken constancy of the multitude" lapses, on which the church has relied for centuries when shaken by violent gales of sophisticated opinion, then there is nothing left to salvage, there is no longer any point in a modernized version for unbelievers. Church-going ceases to be a social act and becomes a matter of taste like chamber music, but a matter of not highly reputable taste. There is no parallel in modern Christendom to the social sanction which in imperial Rome made ritualistic piety long survive the decay of its animating beliefs. There is no good reason today for remodelling the act of public worship. The standpoint of modernism has been washed away. Does this mean that the fate of an illusion has at long last overtaken the church, and that the historical fabric of religion "shall dissolve And . . . Leave not a rack behind"? Secularists would have it so, and therefore contend that it is so. Certainly Christendom, the notion of a civilization founded upon the Christian faith, is a fiction; the silent apostasy of the masses calls attention to the fact, but it is an old fact. In effect, though not officially, Christianity has long disappeared from the centre to become an esoteric sect. But what is at the centre? The official profession of Christianity suggests that there is a confusion of inconsistent and unregarded assumptions in the minds of many of those who bear authority and do the serious work of the world. That is a poor and unworthy substitute for Christianity. If there is to be a description and conception of man and a prescription for his life in the world, an educational ideal and a social ideal, a dynamic of integrated experience and a florescent expression of it, there is to be religion, operationally defined, whatever names are used or avoided and however unlike are the new and the old. You can happily avoid the word religion if you must, but you can only avoid religion if you avoid human life. A sensible recognition of this point avoids a desert of futility in the discussion of religious reconstruction. There is no need to save any religious doctrine whatsoever; there is no need to find a use for any one of the religious conventions or practices. Continuity takes the best care of itself; the interested future can look for it and find it. Meantime no attention can be spared from concentration on the operational veracity of religion, the collective effort to unify, idealize, complete, experience, and express human life in the world. It is not a question of a new religion in the old sense, formed in the dynamic underworld of consciousness. There will be no more such new religions of any significance, and it is worse than idle to look for them. Whoever was the last of the prophets, he is the last. The religion of the modern world will neither be a new prophetic religion, nor a synthesis of world religions, nor the liberal development of any one of them. These are unthinkables. Modern religion can only be, on the one hand, man's co-operative construction of "a symbolic universe that enables him to understand and interpret,

to articulate and organize, to synthesize and universalize his human experience" (Cassirer), and, on the other hand, that human experience itself, creatively formed and creatively expressed.

It is the condemnation of Christianity that it cannot hope to be, that since the 17th century it has not been, the religion of human civilization. The Christian will say that it is not Christianity which is condemned. But it cannot be taken as merely the condemnation of man that since the beginnings of the modern world Christianity has appeared on the crowded public agenda as a routine, formal, and relegated item. It is a religion which gave sublime shape to the materials of an early phase of historical experience. Its very completeness makes it irrelevant. "A sphere once formed continues round and true." Its own achievement disqualifies it for the task of giving shape to the accumulated materials of modern experience. It has played its great part in history: its nectar still tastes, its poison is being worked out of us, its curative and nutritive properties have been assimilated. Some modern Christian apologists defend their cause by insisting that the uniqueness of Christianity is that it is not a culture religion; in the person of Elijah on Carmel it resisted cultural assimilation and has remained the same yesterday, today, and for ever. Its independence of culture is the historical aspect of its claim to universality. This line of argument forces a choice between Christianity and human civilization as a universal ideal. For the apologist it is a suicidal course. But there have always been Christians who glory in making their religion a stumbling-block and foolishness to the world; and there will always be some to whom only paradox is exciting and therefore only paradox is true.

The failure of historical religion has been its failure to idealize man as a creative person. In its idealizations of man it has forced him into individual isolation. Religion has been "what the individual does with his own solitariness" (Whitehead). In his own solitariness the individual can never be a creative person; he can never be man; he can only be his individual self, an abstraction and therefore as the essential person an illusion and failure. Religion has turned the individual self from its proper essence as man to preoccupation with an idealization of its abstract individuality. This vicious abstraction has bedevilled man with dark untruths, idealizations of abstract individual man which characterize the religions and philosophies. Religion has arrested the rhythm of life in the moment of withdrawal, a moment rich and recurrent until it is used to control the motion. The influence of the desert in religion has been too dominant too long. These summary generalizations are thrown out to stimulate reflection on the thesis that the religions have failed to serve modern needs because they have emptied man of his essence by idealizing him as an individual; man as a creative person cannot be idealized as an individual, for he is not an individual, he is civilization. It is by idealizing civilization that religion is to be restored to concreteness, to stabilizing the rhythm of life instead of destructively stabilizing one moment. The modern quarrel with

religion is serious and bitter (or it would be if we were more alive) because it amounts to a charge that religion has falsely and treasonably devalued human life. This apostasy of the religious spirit is tragic. All the epithets of anathema might appropriately be heaped upon it in denunciation. But the chief care is to restore religion to sanity of function. True religion is the wholeness of life, the seasonableness of things and their fruitful interaction. It is the making room in every hour for simple enjoyment, for finalities. It is the reduction of fanaticism and fuss and triviality. It is life at first-hand, the direct selection of essentials in every field. It is regard for disciplines, habits, sentiments, which sustain the sweetness, sanity, and self-renewal of life. In all this, as in major matters, religion is not a system of beliefs, it is an economy; it is the economy of civilization, its inward order sustaining the realm of spirit. Such a religion is not a private lay religion; it is a public economy, the understanding and regulated achievement of human life.

Recognition of the vast work which there is to be done here in restoring or creating the religious spirit in modern civilization makes it absurd to say that the Ethical Movement is this religion, or even that this is the religion of the Ethical Movement. What can be said is that the Ethical Movement is committed to participation in the religious task of elaborating the economy and the ideals of human civilization. That sets a crowded programme of big and little attempts for the next thirty years. Civilization has many fronts, and it should be a first principle of these attempts that national and international affairs are mainly means to personal, family, and local life. There is a basis of activity for local groups, and that is one focus of the work to be done. The other focus is the public consciousness.

The original standpoint of the Ethical Movement is its insistence on the independence and sovereignty of ethics, in particular the insistence that ethics is independent of any theological or metaphysical doctrine or sanction. In practice the movement has been ambiguous in regard to religion, either inclining to the outright identification of religion with ethics, or leaving room for private beliefs of any character so long as the independence and paramountcy of ethics is faithfully recognised and jealously preserved. This kind of ambiguity runs through most of the liberal religious thinking of the last three generations. It is not realistic and is apt to be dishonest. What is the position now? The independence of ethics is both manifestly true and manifestly untrue, and both truth and untruth at this time of day are so plain that the doctrine is not very helpful. Ethical ideals and obligations as such are not tied up with religious beliefs: there will be ethical ideals and obligations in a society in which religious beliefs, in the ordinary sense, have been rejected. On the other hand, strongly held religious beliefs are bound to influence ethical ideals and obligations. The assertion of the independence of ethics is an historical position: affirmation of the relevance and truth of current ethical conceptions and of the irrelevance and untruth of current religious beliefs with which they

have long been associated. It is not a final truth, a permanent foundation. It announces the end of a dispensation, and indicates the need for developments in both fields.

Both religion and ethics can be treated as comparative sciences leading to a philosophy of religion and a philosophy of morals; and it is this line of approach which gives the fullest insight into their nature and relations, and resolves the uncertainties of modern religious thinking. Vast contributions have been made to this study, but no commanding synthesis has yet been achieved. Meanwhile, perhaps it is legitimate to speculate thus: the tension between personal drives and complex social control (the ethical field) is complicated by other tensions brought in by the rationalizing, idealizing mind (without which there is no ethical field), and the total resolution of these tensions, active reconciliation of the self, the world, and the ideal, lies, as it were, in a field beyond the boundaries of moral obligation. Ethics, as it were, starts a process which cannot stop with the fulfilment of ethical requirements, unless ethical requirements are expanded to include a great deal more than current demands, than what is properly called moral obligation. Complete integration, active union of the rationalizing, idealizing self with the world, is an achievement of personal experience; nevertheless, it is a normal aspiration which must become a human standard below which human life falls short of its dignity, completeness, and value. This means that there must be public, defined routes to this personal achievement. In the modern world these routes will not be those marked out by the historical religions, for they have proceeded from far different premises and assumptions about man and the world. Modern religion must take its descriptions and conceptions of man and of the world from the reports of the sciences, and its prescriptions from the approriate disciplines, of which ethics is chief. Religion is not itself a science or a discipline: it is the vital harmony of the whole achievement, the grand realization itself. As a comparative science, it is the study of the manner of earlier attempts; as an ideal, it is a resolute new attempt.

Ethics is the principal integrating agent in this total achievement, and from the standpoint of ethics there can be no indifference to historical religious beliefs, in so far as they are current and active; for it is the responsibility of ethics to bring to bear on the individual's responsible, rational choice of life all the relevant facts and factors, and to exclude those which are irrelevant or suppositous—a radical sifting for this purpose of human knowledge. This mediating function of ethics if it is not guided by scientific standards is an outrageous imposture. The objection may here be interjected that if religion also must be standardized in the modern world, isn't that the finishing touch to the mechanization of man? The question indicates a very serious misunderstanding. The nearer humanity can get to common assumptions and expectations about human life and to a common organization of human experience, the more certainly will the individual personally achieve a genuine experience of the world; and such an experience is

capable of inexhaustible renewal: nothing is gained merely by missing or distorting it in a great diversity of ways. Standardization of experience is an overriding aim; it is the public aspect of religion, the economy of civilization.

The individual choice of life which it is a responsibility of ethics to assist has in the modern world to take account of planning in the national and international fields. In all these intersecting fields of planning and purpose, co-ordination is hardly enough; ideal reciprocity, the interdependence and interaction of total fulfilment, is a necessary aim. Social developments have made plain to us in concrete terms what many moralists have understood or postulated, viz., that the universality of ethics is not the universal relevance of ethical maxims, nor the absolute responsibility of every conscience, but a universal society commensurate with humanity in which common standards prevail throughout. Moralists have been preoccupied with one ideal form or another of such a society. We are none of us members of such a society, and our ethical rules and judgements of conscience have their reference and relevance to the determinate society of which we are actually members. Ethical principles, in the main, fall under the concept of good faith or the concept of justice, In either case, in the main, the content of the principles is determined by the character of the society. Feudal justice is not the same as Mosaic justice or the justice of the social service state. Good faith is good faith the world over and in every age, but the kind of promise, the kind of contract, the kind of responsibility and duty in which good faith is expected and exercised varies widely with the character of the society. Justice in the abstract means, no discrimination; or, operationally defined, what happens between equals; but it has no content of its own to dispense, it waits on specific claims and interests: it listens for a cry. The universality of formal ethical principles, of the type of justice and good faith, is not to be undervalued, and it has played a resounding part in the history of man, but it is not (as sometimes it is) to be mistaken for the concrete universality of which ethics is the prophecy; a common world order which enables ethical principles to be constructively applied and which sustains and enforces common standards in the social means of a complete human life. Liberty, equality, and fraternity is indeed the sovereign truth of human association, but it is true of ideal society not of actual human relations, as Newton's laws of motion are true of frictionless bodies not of actual matter. In practice, liberty, equality, and fraternity are limited to determinate possibilities and definable meanings in every actual society; the best of the existing possibilities may be fulfilled and new possibilities created, moving in the direction of definable common meanings and a universal conception of human betterment and fulfilment, in the concrete terms of institutions, social policies and standards, and actual achievements. This achievement of concrete ethical universality is an historical process. In every age it demands a clear understanding of what is next to be done. The interpretation of the age in terms of a precise conception of its task, its venture into the future, is of the greatest

ethical importance; and it is here that the Ethical Movement has, if it will, a part to play. It is sufficient to remark that Marxist thought has played a part of incalculable influence in the development of the last historical phase, an influence which is not yet spent but which is becoming less appropriate in its drastic simplification. All the many means of influencing social change are wanted for the achievement of ethical universality, and among them of course politics is indispensable, but not necessarily the most important. It is a common consciousness which not only prepares but is the ultimate sustaining condition of a world order: a common consciousness of social process, a common patience with the limitation imposed by possibilities, a common conception of the plenitude and diversity of human life to be realized in civilization. Here again politics play a principal part; the achievement of a common human consciousness is not merely a matter of propagating ideas; it is even more a matter of creating common material interests, and of an education founded upon the practical use of material means to an expansion of interests. The subject-matter of modern ethics is a social complex which is dangerously over-simplified alike by insistence upon the sufficiency of universal ethical principles and by the reduction of Marxist politics. It may be conceded at once that Marxist politics are more adequate than ethical principles, for institutions are dealing with the problem of evil more realistically than maxims. Nevertheless, Marxist thought and organization are inappropriate to the next phase, and it is of mounting importance to get a grip on the requirements, the possibilities, and the definition of the next phase. Marxism has perhaps been the finest instrument of realistic thought and action ever devised, but, like everything else, it serves its turn. Humanist thought has to elaborate concepts and devise methods of organization which will serve the purpose of tomorrow. Meantime, of course, there is always more in today's opportunities than we are personally capable of realizing. Life is not denied us because the future has even greater possibilities; and to sacrifice today to tomorrow shows a radical defect, the supreme disqualification for living, the ultimate irreligion.

The Ethical Movement has nothing to be ashamed of in its record of social action. Its members have pioneered on most of the progressive fronts: women's emancipation, the labour movement, settlements and day nurseries, penal reform and divorce law reform, the peace movement and international order; these have been its regular concern. All such work must go on, and with greater effectiveness. But piecemeal work is not enough; its members must focus their thought and discussions on a determinate achievable social ideal of English life, issuing in a programme of action. And absolute respect for the sovereignty of the individual conscience must be modified by the recognition that conscience is to be socially created: neither left to the haphazard influences which enter into its formation, nor indoctrinated, but made at the same time fully responsible and fully informed. The Ethical Movement if it stands for anything stands for an enlightened education of conscience which enables the individual to make a really effective rational choice

of life by bringing home to him the character of that choice and the information which should enter into it, and especially an interpretation of the age. In all this there is no break with the past; there is development and the search for more effective methods, more thoroughness and concentration. The Ethical Movement does not offer the world a new religion nor a new ethical theory, but by concentration upon selected tasks contributes to a religious consciousness of the world and an ethical realization of universal society. A modern description and conception of man and of the world, modern prescriptions for action and experience, issuing in new achievements of expression: such a formula indicates a complex organization of human life which in its realized unity is, in its personal inwardness, religion, and in its outwardness, civilization. The Ethical Movement selects its tasks from this theme, and contributes with all its resources in all the ways that it can to this realization.

H. J. BLACKHAM.

ETHICS IN A CHANGING WORLD

THE Ethical Movement is a product of the disintegration of "revealed" religion. It is significant that the two men to whom the Movement looks back as virtual founders were both ministers of religion, the one a Unitarian, the other a Jew. Moncure Conway, active in America as an abolitionist, after failing to imbue his American co-religionists with his radical creed, found the haven where he would be in the pulpit of South Place. Felix Adler, finding orthodox Judaism incredible in a scientific age, founded the Society for Ethical Culture in order to save what could be saved of religious idealism in a world which no longer left room for the supernatural. The basis of existing Ethical Societies, whether they trace their descent from Conway or from Adler, may be defined as the assumption that there is a highest common factor of Judaism and Christianity which remains valid when the authority of the Old and New Testaments is discarded.

Was this assumption true in 1876? Is it true in 1946? In the sense in which past leaders of the Ethical Movement (notably Stanton Coit) have believed it to be true, I should say that it was an optical illusion. Coit seems to have entertained a hope that the Church of England might be led to shed its dogmas and to take its place as the embodiment of national idealism—an embodiment of which he tried to provide a miniature model in the West London Ethical Society. Any such hope rests, I believe, on a profound misapprehension of the historic function of Anglicanism and indeed of State Churches in general. That people trained in an Anglican atmosphere, who possibly after much mental struggle had intellectually rejected the beliefs of their childhood, might be attracted by a form of service which perpetuated the tradition without the beliefs was perhaps a plausible expectation. But that a generation which has grown up without either the tradition or the beliefs of Anglicanism should have any use for such experiments is a wholly otiose supposition. The established churches have lost not only

their intellectual, but their sentimental hold on the generation to which the Ethical Movement now has to address itself; and there is no use in cumbering ourselves with top hamper.

The disintegration of "revealed" religion which led, among other things, to the foundation of the Ethical Movement was only one aspect of a revolution which for many generations has been with accelerating *tempo* transforming civilisation. The orthodox Jewish and Christian creeds from which we have moved away reflected a pre-industrial and pre-scientific civilisation in which authoritarian beliefs answered to an authoritarian social structure. Catholicism was the religious superstructure natural to feudal Europe. Anglicanism, which owed its existence to the religious revolution put through by Tudor Parliaments, substituted royal for papal authority, but perpetuated the authoritarian basis of both creed and conduct. The child of Anglican parents learnt and still learns that his duty is "to honour and obey the King, and all that are put in authority under him, . . . to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters, . . . and to do my duty in that state of life, unto which it shall please God to call me." That is, the formularies of Anglicanism presuppose a class society and a sovereign national State as ultimate postulates. There is no more room for trade unionism, democracy, Socialism and internationalism in the Anglican scheme than there is for the higher criticism or the theory of evolution.

But in the last three hundred years the authoritarian social structure and the authoritarian beliefs answering to it have been undermined with increasing rapidity and over an ever-widening area. Firstly, by a continuation of the process which disrupted western Christendom and established national churches at the Reformation, these national churches in their turn have been challenged in the name of liberty of conscience —a development logically leading to the secularisation of politics and the separation of Church and State. Secondly, the great age of science which began in the seventeenth century has seen the progressive elaboration of a materialist picture of the world (first in astronomy and physics, then in chemistry and biology, finally in sociology and psychology) by which the pre-scientific faiths have been elbowed out or reduced to mere wishful thinking. Thirdly, the alliance of industry and commerce with science has revolutionised production, distribution and communication, replaced the local market by the world market and economically unified the globe. Fourthly, the industrial revolution, by increasing the size of the economic unit and replacing the independent yeoman and artisan by a working class divorced from ownership, has generated new class conflicts and made old political catchwords misleading or unmeaning. Lastly, the attempt to meet the demands of the working class while preserving the private ownership of land and capital has led to a ruthless international struggle for markets, raw materials and spheres of influence which has culminated in totalitarian war and in the threat to civilisation represented by the atomic bomb.

These lines of development, political, intellectual, economic, social and international, are inseparably interconnected. All alike are the outcome

of that "discovery of the world and of man" which accompanied the voyages of the great navigators and which we call the Renaissance. At times the interconnection of the aspects of the revolution has been evident to the protagonists themselves. The French Encyclopædists knew that the battle for rationality and tolerance in thought, the battle for industrial progress and the battle for political liberation were one. Paine knew that the *Rights of Man* and the *Age of Reason* were interdependent. Shelley wrote himself down a lover of mankind, a democrat and an atheist. Newman on the other side, reasoning correctly from his twisted premisses, saw in science, progress, toleration, utilitarianism and democracy so many facets of the infernal thing which, under the name of Liberalism, he denounced and abhorred. The political Catholics, Fascists and Nazis of our own day, translating Newman's theory into murderous practice, know well what they do and why.

But at other times the interconnection has not been clear. The Ethical Movement was founded in what historians of the future will perhaps call the Antonine period of modern history—the period when industrial civilisation, having weathered the civil and international storms which attended its birth, seemed to have attained a stable equilibrium. At a time when Britain had peacefully enfranchised her working class and was listening to the scientific message of Darwin, Tyndall and Huxley, when France had survived the fever and disaster of Bonapartism to be still a great power and a centre of world culture, when Italy and Germany had attained what seemed to be free nationhood, and when the United States had emerged from their Civil War purged of slavery and dedicated to free enterprise, it was plausible to suppose that an era of pacific progress and enlightenment lay ahead. Old faiths were crumbling at the touch of scientific criticism: yes, but the moral law within every rational being could not crumble. Wealth was badly distributed, and the cheapening of the products of industry led to a chronic glut and to unemployment which tended to become permanent: well, the remedy was to moralise both capital and labour and make men better citizens. It was unthinkable that rational beings, if they thought their thought out, should ultimately differ, or that the consciences of different persons should ultimately conflict. Salvage morals from the wreck of dogma, and the rest will take care of itself!

There were dissentient voices. Marx had denied the identity of the moral law in every rational being and asserted that men's moral consciousness was conditioned by the economic relations in which they lived and moved. Ibsen was beginning his dramatic exposure of the social rottenness and domestic misery caused by men's and women's sacrifice of themselves to an ideal which was the mere mask of an ugly reality. Nietzsche, from an opposite point of view, was attacking the utilitarian principle and asserting the right of the strong to treat the weak as means to the realisation of their own will to power. But neither the German-Jewish sociologist nor the Norwegian playwright nor the sinister anticipator of Fascism could shake the faith of nineteenth century progressives in the sovereign efficacy of reason.

Dis aliter visum. Events have fallen out not as the idealists said they *should,* but partly as Marx, partly as Nietzsche said they *would.* Prolonged unemployment and wage reductions led in the eighties to a revival of Socialism in England and to repeated riots in London by men who had never heard of Conway or Adler, but who knew that their wives and children were hungry and that Parliament did nothing for them. British Governments sought a solution of economic difficulties in imperial expansion. Other Governments faced with similar difficulties did likewise. Africa was partitioned in order that the development of new territories might put a period to trade depression and divert the working class movement from Socialist objectives to safe channels. For a time this policy was successful. But the result was a dangerous rivalry between the capitalists of different countries, involving their respective Governments and leading by the familiar road of "incidents," competitive armaments and secret diplomacy to world war.

In face of all this what had practical reason to say? What relevancy to the hard facts of class and international conflict had preachments about the categorical imperative and the sufficiency of the moral sentiment? The trumpet of Sinai gave an uncertain sound, and its hearers prepared themselves to battle with one another. For let us make no mistake. The people who lionised Rhodes and Jameson, who painted the map red, who committed us to the secret understandings which led to the Four Years' War, and who followed up the war to end war by a peace to end peace were not sinners above all men. They were fulfilling the moral law as they understood it. It was the other people, the little-Englanders, the pro-Boers, the pacifists who in their estimation were knaves and traitors and friends of every country but their own. The Ethical Movement could give no lead because its ethics had no political content. Of the public men who were connected with or who supported the movement some were on one side and some on the other—all, according to their lights, being equally faithful to the moral ideal.

Belfort Bax in 1886 had aptly characterised the predicament of the ethical idealist who shunned the dust and heat of the political battle.

> "These aims 'won from the void and formless infinite' seem to be only won for the sake of being handed over to the equally formless indefinite . . . The sentimental Socialist desires above all things to be broad and comprehensive. Now any proposition conveying a distinct meaning is necessarily limited by that meaning, and must be taken to exclude its opposite, and *a fortiori* the society adopting it to exclude those who hold its opposite. But how can a society whose aims are so high condescend to such matters of detail as *meaning*? How can a man as catholic as the 'Brother of the Higher Life,' or a member of the 'Communion of Noble Aspirations,' or of the 'New Atlantis Society' be so narrow as to exclude anyone? . . . All is possible in the man (or woman) who aims high enough. Danton's motto, 'To dare, to dare, and again to dare,' becomes in the hands of the sentimental Socialist, 'To aim, to aim, and again to aim' at an ineffable O—*voila tout.*"[1]

[1]The Religion of Socialism, sixth edition, pp. 99-100.

An Ethical Movement which is to be relevant to the life of the twentieth century must start from the fact that science, industry and commerce have made the world one, and that moral ideals rooted in the pre-scientific and pre-industrial past and in national self-sufficiency are not only mistaken, but positively dangerous. The Ethical Movement, therefore, should not attempt to salvage the "moral idealism" of the churches—those churches which historically have served only as auxiliary policemen to the feudal or capitalist State, and now trail helplessly in the wake of State policy for the time being. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Rather should we go for our ideal to movements which have their roots in the new world which science, industry and commerce have made. Side by side with the industrial revolution has gone the development of the Labour Movement. From illicit combinations for raising wages to legalised trade unions, from Owen's critical analysis of capitalism and advocacy of co-operation to the Rochdale pioneers, from the Chartist six points to Labour representation in Parliament, from the new unionism of the eighties to the Labour Party of the twentieth century, this movement, the creation of the people themselves, has gone from strength to strength and is to-day the working religion of millions. Wherever industrialism has taken root, trade unionism, co-operation and Socialism have tended to take root also. If we seek a new religion, a modern faith, a moral ideal with a political content, there it is. In no other movement is there the driving force necessary to overcome those rivalries which have twice in our lifetime bathed the world in blood and which threaten to lay civilisation in ruins. For those rivalries are rooted in the need of big business for expanding markets overseas in default of effective demand at home. Nothing but the ousting of big business from political and economic power and the direction of industry to the raising of the standard of living of the people, regardless of the profit of the few, can eliminate that cause of war. And that is the objective of the Labour Movement.

But, it will be said, this is asking the Ethical Movement to take sides in politics. That would have been a valid objection seventy years ago. But are we to learn nothing from experience? It may have been plausible seventy years ago to suppose that ethics were a subject on which people of every party and no party could agree. It is not plausible now. For the history of those seventy years, and especially of the last thirty, has driven home the truth that Right and Left have not a common standard of right and wrong. Both Right and Left are capable of idealism; but their ideals are not the same. The good of the one is the evil of the other; the light of the one is the darkness of the other; the god of the one is the devil of the other. I am not writing in the air. In the course of a lifetime not very much shorter than that of the Ethical Movement I have travelled from the extreme Right to the extreme Left. Anyone who has made that rather unusual voyage knows that what I say is true.

I suppose that it will be agreed that the most important result of the First World War was one not intended by its authors—the Russian Revolution and the seizure of power for the first time in any country

by a Marxist party. Whatever may be thought of the Marxist philosophy, I suppose it will be agreed that it purports to be based on the scientific approach to the world and on an analysis of the phenomena of modern industry and commerce. Herein lay its novelty. For in so far as the Governments which held power in Western Europe and America between the wars had any philosophy at all, it was a philosophy rooted in the pre-scientific past and in ideas of property and sovereignty dating from before the industrial revolution. The history of the world between the wars must be read in the light of this fundamental incompatibility of outlook. In effect the world was torn by a three-cornered war, open or veiled, between three parties—western capitalism, victorious in the First World War and interested in keeping what it held; Central European capitalism, defeated in that war and interested in recovering what it had lost; and the Labour Movement, badly led and not yet conscious of its power, but in Russia victorious and everywhere interested in ending war and securing a better life for all.

Ethically the parties had no common yardstick. To the Right, for example, the general strike of 1926 was a criminal conspiracy against the State; to the Left it was an inspiring demonstration of working class solidarity. Each after twenty years is of the same opinion still. To the Right it was self-evident that Poor Law administration should be deterrent: "Poplarism," therefore, stank. To the Left it was equally self-evident that relief should be on a scale calculated to keep a family in health. To the Right Fascism (until it declared war on the British Empire) was a welcome ally against the Labour Movement; to the Left it was the foulest reign of terror seen on earth since the days of the Inquisition. The essential unity of the modern world was ironically illustrated by the tendency of big business, regardless of national rivalry, to make common cause against the Left everywhere—in central Europe, in Italy, in Spain, in Czechoslovakia—right up to the very eve of the Second World War.

Is there any greater indication of ethical solidarity between Right and Left to-day, after six years' war, than there was before? There is none; nor was it to be expected. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" From China to Peru Right and Left, reaction and revolution, the embodied past and the embodied future confront each other in irreconcilable hostility, the eyes of the one on Wall Street, the eyes of the other on Moscow, manoeuvring for position. What, then, is the Ethical Movement to do? The question would be unanswerable if its ranks included any appreciable contingent from the Right. To judge, however, from the reactions of the average Ethical Society audience, that is not so. The Right is far too sensible of the sedative uses of religion to soil itself with heterodoxy: indeed, judging from the vogue of Mr. C. S. Lewis and the resolutions of the Primrose League on religious education, its present tendency is to fundamentalism. The difficulty in recommending a programme to the Ethical Movement is the prevalence not of a Right, but of a Liberal mentality, deriving ultimately from the Kantian presuppositions with which Adler started in 1876.

If the Ethical Movement is to play any part in the social processes of our time, those presuppositions must be revised. Kantian idealism is not true to life: life would be much simpler if it were! Even if the consciousness of moral obligation is a constituent part of our nature, we are not all conscious of the same obligations. It is historically untrue to say that every rational being is conscious of an obligation to treat mankind as an end and not as a means. Was the average slaveowner so conscious? Was the average feudal lord? Was the average industrialist a hundred years ago? Is the average shareholders' meeting to-day? Moral consciousness is conditioned by material interest; and if we are to have a moral world, society (as Helvétius saw, but Kant did not) must be so organised as to associate public and private interest. Translated into the language of the industrial age, this means that we must have Socialism.

"But why should anyone believe in Socialism and work for it, unless it serves his interest in the social struggle?" There may have been no answer to this question in 1876. In 1946 the questioner can be invited to state whether it would serve his interest to be annihilated by an atomic bomb, and if not, how he proposes to go to work to prevent it. Capitalism, on the scale on which it now operates, has proved itself unable to provide us with full employment except at the price of a periodical blood-bath. The dilemma confronting the rugged individualist is today quite literally, "Your money or your life!" If he prefers to chance it, there are plenty of others who do not. The immediate job of the progressive movement, and therefore of the Ethical Movement, is to do everything possible by education, agitation and organisation to increase the number of these latter. As I have said elsewhere, the transformation necessary in most of us is not a change of heart, but a change of head.

It may be asked what contribution the Ethical Movement can make to this process without becoming a fifth wheel in the coach. Political agitation and education are the work of societies existing for those specific purposes; political organisation is the work of Parliamentary parties. That is perfectly true. But the political Left in general is deficient in one thing which the Ethical Movement might help to supply, namely a philosophy. Every movement which has changed the world in the past —Christianity, Islam, the Reformation, the French Revolution— has found a theoretical basis and a guide to action in a specific picture of the world and philosophy of history. The British Labour Movement lives happily from hand to mouth. I am well aware of the sterling contribution which Marxists both in the Communist and Labour Parties have made to the education of the movement. But the Communist Party, not by its own wish, is outside the Labour Party. Transport House, which seems to have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing in the last twenty years, does its best to ban any contact between the two, while placing no bar on the insidious counter-penetration of Catholic reactionaries. This is where the Ethical Movement comes in. By propagating in the political Left a scientific approach to the world and a history purged of myth, adherents of the Ethical Movement will help to supply back-

ground, confidence, driving force and staying power to a party with which, more than with anyone else in Britain, rests now the responsibility for the salvation of the world.

But in order to impart a philosophy to others, the Ethical Movement must make up its own mind on fundamentals. All issues, therefore, bearing on our task should be patiently thrashed out in our own ranks. First, philosophical issues. What do we know? What do we mean by such terms as "matter," "mind," "God"? Can we know that matter exists? That mind exists? That God exists? That we are mortal or immortal? If we do not know, have we a right to believe? Next, ethical issues. What do we mean by such terms as "good" and "evil"? Have we a right to use them if we do not believe in God? What do we mean by "free will"? What do we know of it? Is there any absolute good? If not, why do we behave decently? Next, anthropology. What is the evidence for evolution? What do we mean by "the survival of the fittest"? Is man a fighting animal? Or a religious animal? Or a social animal? Next, history. What is civilisation? How did priestcraft begin? And slavery? And serfdom? How can we check the Bible? What is the evidence for and against Christianity? Why did Rome decline? What caused the Reformation? The French Revolution? The Russian? Lastly, politics. Give an account (as objective as you can) of the British Empire, the Tory, Liberal and Labour Parties, capitalism, Socialism, Communism, Fascism, the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R., the United Nations Organisation.

By the time we have hammered out our attitude to these questions in free discussion, we shall have turned ourselves into modern equivalents of Plato's philosopher-statesmen. Without waiting for the completion of that process, we should meanwhile do our best to promote similar discussion in other organisations of which we happen to be members, at the same time pulling our full weight in their normal activities. Thereby, I believe, we shall be rendering the best service to the cause of peace and progress which it is in the power of the Ethical Movement to render. The way forward lies not in trying to galvanise into a ghastly imitation of life a ritual borrowed from churches already intellectually dead and politically damned, but in helping to build up in our own country (others will see to it elsewhere) a force which will translate the economic unification of mankind into the language of politics, break for ever the power of reaction and vested interest, and guide the world into the way of peace.

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

A HUMANIST CONFERENCE

THE British Section of the Union Mondiale Des Libres Penseurs has arranged a conference which will be held at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, from April 30 to May 5, on *A Humanist View of the World*. We print below the syllabus of the conference. Programmes are available and may be had from the editor.

INTRODUCTORY. Humanists strive for the creation, the experience, and the expression of a complete human life, conceived as an ideal of

universal civilization. Humanists are therefore concerned with man as by nature a creator and redeemer not with man as by grace an object of supernatural redemption; with a world which is sufficient because it promises success, not with a world which promises a sequel because it imposes defeat. Thus Humanism is founded upon man, the idealization of man as civilization, that is man in the full historical compass of his humanity, not individual man in the solitariness of his hopes and fears. In this idealization, there is no possibility of conflict between Humanism and science, for Humanism neither claims nor aspires to authority over science; it makes no reservations, and therefore unfeignedly welcomes the advancement of science: science is its starting-point, and it goes on to interpret and to use the established results of science.

Rationalism (Tuesday, April 30, 7-9 p.m.) We agree with Croce that "the eager, critical, constructive labour of the mind in liberty is the historical force, the irreplaceable religion;" and with Santayana that "with that freedom goes the modesty of reason that can lay claim only to partial knowledge, and to the ordering of a particular soul, or city, or civilization." But reason, competent and modest, and informed by an eager spirit, does not make knowledge an end in itself; its goal is the application of knowledge to practical ends and to the achievement of experience, that is, to the creation and the enjoyment of civilization.

Naturalism. (Wednesday, May 1, 7-9 p.m.) Human existence is material existence. The human mind is dependent upon the material organization of the body and upon its material environment, natural and social. All life as we know it is the life of organized material identities having continuity and connexion. Whether or not there is, or can be, immaterial existence, it is illegitimate to suppose that such an existence can be either a form of human existence or an object of human experience.

On the other hand, it is evident that every species of living material organization has a specific character which cannot be deduced from general scientific laws (even chemical compounds seem to have such a character), and the more complex that character the more scope there is for individual variation. Thus each material identity has its generic and its individual character. In the generic character of man, mind acts on body as well as body on mind: there are mental initatives; it is arbitrary and contrary to experience to assume otherwise. Therefore Humanism, on grounds of science (the logical interpretation of experience), rejects not only Christian dualism of body and spirit, but also metaphysical dogmas which reduce mind to nothing but matter—a mere abstraction. Freedom, in the sense of individual self-determination, although it is not a generic attribute of man, is a possible personal achievement. Thus man is capable of a creative mastery over the conditions and the values of his own life; to some extent, personal mastery, and to an indefinitely great extent, collective mastery.

Man (Thursday, May 2, 7-9 p.m.) In the philosophies and religions of the world man has variously described and idealized himself: notably, as spectator, sufferer, outcast, salvager, escapist, Titan, freebooter, and,

recently, beast of prey. Humanists see man as labourer, technician, administrator, scientist, artist, thinker, adventurer; and idealize him as creator and enjoyer of a universal life from which no one can separate himself and none can be excluded, and which imposes on each the responsibility of finding his place and playing his part. The ideal of man cannot be a private ideal, a merely personal pursuit: it is necessarily a public ideal, the deepest enjoyment by each of a life created by all.

Nature (Friday, May 3, 7-9 p.m.) Nature is the theatre of man's action, the source of his impressions and images, the nurse of his sensibility, and the consolation of his imagination. It is also the material of his art and the means of his existence.

We agree with the Epicureans, "Nature is her own standard, one thing throws light on another," and, "Nothing arises . . . in order that we may use it, but what arises brings forth its use." Thus nature imposes on man limiting conditions and offers determinate possibilities; and man does not impose on nature an arbitrary will, a raw ideal, but works with and within nature: the development and articulation of his thought, the life of his sentiments, and the generation of his purposes and ideals are processes of nature no less than the growth of his body, the cultivation of his gardens—and the creation of his cities. Civilization is not the conquest of nature (a sterile metaphor), but rather a marriage, the closest partnership, the highest union, a fertile plenitude; it is the supreme work of art, source of the richest and highest happiness.

Civilization. (Saturday, May 4, 3-5 p.m.) In history, as in nature, there is no cosmic purpose, and no pre-determined process. Nevertheless, there are given conditions and universal principles. Science, art, education, law, politics, technics, are all disciplines as well as instruments of human purpose; they contain objective factors which limit the choice of possibilities and the conflict of ideals. The larger possibilities of human destiny and the social ideal of human life are matters for collective decisions and planned action. The time has come for mankind collectively to provide for man as such the means of a complete life worthy to be called human. This socialization of the means of life, as a world standard, may involve sacrifice of the aristocratic or epicurean quality of the social ideal for the sake of its universality. Humanists stand for this choice of democratic universality.

It is unthinkable that any form or development of the Christian faith can provide the premises and assumptions which will enable the diverse members of the United Nations Organization to make a common approach to the problems of world standards and a common humanity. Cross purposes are engendered and obscured by underlying differences in assumptions. It is the formulation and persistent declaration of a humanist outlook everywhere which will force the clarification of issues and the discovery, definition, and measurement of real differences in the common discharge of the supreme task with which the United Nations Organization in its full scope has been charged.

Religion. (Saturday, May 4, 7-9 p.m.) Humanists today are not fighting a dominant religion. Therefore, although militant, they have no need

to be aggressive. Their aspiration to universality will be fulfilled, and their cause is only hindered and desecrated by a narrow inhospitable spirit in the grip of bigotry. Humanists, of all people, must not be literal-minded pedants, for their passion, their religion, is humanity, man in nature and in history, not some abstract rationalization of man. Religion has played a great part in history, for good and for ill. It cannot be treated as a banned topic, a painful aberration in the behaviour of a rational animal. The time has come to review it with understanding, with the eyes of the anthropologist, the historian, the psychologist, and the philosopher. There is no need to hide the seamy side. There is no need to belittle the attempts of man to idealize himself in relation to his situation, to unify and complete his experience of the world. Indeed, Humanism is itself a bid to carry through this essential enterprise more successfully than the supernatural religions. If it were not, it would have nothing to say that did not insult man with a mockery of himself. Therefore Humanism has a philosophy of religion which finds room for the past and the future, an interpretation of the past and a vision of the future.

BOOK REVIEWS

Religion In America. By Willard L. Sperry. Cambridge University Press, 10s. 6d.

This account of religion in America by the Dean of the Divinity School in Harvard University makes the first volume in a new Cambridge series on American Life and Institutions. The author (some forty years ago) came to Oxford as a Rhodes scholar for his higher education—as an alternative to Germany, a sheer waste of time in the opinion of most eminent American educationists of that day. Oxford may have had a little to do with the urbanity and detachment of these pages, but the writer's manliness and Christian liberalism are characteristically American; and unhappily we are not ready to pay for the importation of imponderables from American universities. It is this American quality of liberal Christianity which makes the outstanding impression of the book, and confirms the impression made by writers in, for example, *The Review of Religion.* Here are men with abundant scholarship, alert and lively minds, sincerely holding the Christian faith without dogmatic inclinations or stubborn judgements, and interested in contemporary trends and the conjectural future. It is a temper which European Christians seem to have lost.

Dr. Sperry is not sure whether the far greater church attachment and attendance in America (something more than fifty per cent. of the total population compared with some ten per cent. here) represents a cultural lag or is a contemporary reality. He finds evidence of a lag. He speaks of men who are doing much if not most of the serious work of the modern world, in the professions and at the universities, as being only one generation removed from the church, and in their type a generation behind such men as T. H. Huxley, John Morley, and Leslie Stephen, and

he quotes Bishop Barry as saying that such humanism is the religion of half the intelligent persons in the modern world. He thinks that it would be good for the world if the humanist movement on the ecclesiastical left could gather them in, and that it might make the most powerful of all the denominations; but he does not think it is probable that the humanist left will succeed in getting their adherence. Certainly there is an organized theological left-wing in America (as there is not here) standing unequivocally for an unashamed humanism, yet remaining within the Western religious tradition and looking and working for American religion in its totality to cast in its lot with humanism. This has been the work of the Unitarians pre-eminently. Again, it may represent a lag behind the Modernist movement which was driven out of the European Catholic church and is a spent force in the contemporary Anglican church.

The two dominant factors in the American religious situation are the neutrality of the State and the American temperament. Dr. Sperry, although he is not a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, seems to have an Oxford affection for the Anglican Church, which carries with it a romantic notion of the benefits of Establishment that sharpens the painful sense he has of the disadvantages of the secular state. There is no norm for the American churches. The Idea of the Church cannot subsist among innumerable local churches of various denominations on a footing with other local associations in a pluralistic and equalitarian society. The multiplication of sects (256 are listed in the Census) is merely incidental, for "some 200 denominations compass only 3 per cent. of our church membership." However, Dr. Sperry's romantic Anglicanism carries him far beyond the Establishment question when he puts first, as the major and most regrettable consequence of the separation of church and state, the loss to religion of the field of education, and quotes with approval Alexander Meiklejohn's book *Education Between Two Worlds*: "I doubt if any other change is as significant as the substitution of *political* for *religious* teaching. We have changed our procedure for determining what kind of beings human beings shall be." The philosophy of education may be the all-important question of our time, but it is a quaint view which supposes that it has anything very much to do with the question of an established church.

The imperatives of the American temperament form the warp in the fabric of their Christian faith and order and life and work; and there is no trace of naïveté in Dr. Sperry's awareness of this. Using William James's division, he calls his countrymen 'once-born souls.' He characterizes *The Varieties of Religious Experience* as America's theological classic, and the explorations in the field of the psychology of religion as America's contribution to theology. There is some explanation of the large church membership in what he says of the ordinary citizen: "Religion commends itself to the average American as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. It makes for good government, for honesty in business, for integrity of character, for obedience to law, for world peace, therefore it is to be professed and practised. In the vernacular of

the market place, you can "sell" religion to any American if you can prove to him its usefulness for other ends in which he already has a prior interest." The result is that American Christianity tends to be superficial, to lose the quality of religion: "American Christianity is for the most part two-dimensional, extending only in contemporary space. If it lacks the depth and perspective given by an awareness of history, it lacks even more markedly the traditional Christian reference to all that is meant by eternity." The sombre Christian view of human nature has not been taken too seriously in American Christianity; so that the paradoxical situation occurs now that many of those who have been trained in the biological and social sciences have no use for the liberal churches on account of their optimism about human nature. Dr. Sperry asks, "must we go back, for the want of any other doctrine, to the disparagement of human nature which was the elder fashion? Or, can we perhaps fashion some credible contemporary doctrine of man which shall be at once realistic and reassuring? Much of the religion of America hereafter will depend upon our resolution of this issue."

It is a readable book, and may be read for the informative account of its subject, for its example of American Life and Institutions, or for its sidelights on the present state and prospects of Christendom.

There are eight Appendixes giving statistical and documentary material as a background to the views and comments of the text.

RATIONALISM IN EDUCATION AND LIFE. By Sir John Hammerton, P. Sargant Florence, G. R. Owst, and others. Watts, paper boards, 2s. 6d.; cloth, 5s.

This is a full report of the first annual conference of the Rationalist Press Association, held at Wadham College, Oxford, in August of last year. The Conference programme at the outset was focussed on the R.P.A.'s policy for religious instruction in schools, and later moved into the general field of Rationalism to-day; and this is reflected in the division of the report into three parts. Parts II and III are concerned with the Rationalist assessment of religion, particularly the Christian faith, and the Rationalist outlook on culture and civilization. The six essays devoted to these themes, contributed by Prof. Gordon Childe, Mr. Archibald Robertson, Mr. F. H. A. Micklewright, and Prof. A. E. Heath, are excellent: vigorous, competent, interesting, and constructive, a model of serious and convincing work in the rationalist field. The newcomer to Rationalism will find in these two parts the most stimulating and informative papers of the conference. But the Rationalist will take these matters for granted and, with an appreciative gesture, pass on (or turn back) to Part I. Here there is plenty for him to think about, in the R.P.A.'s programme for religious instruction in schools and in the treatment of the proposals by Prof. Owst and Dr. Kenneth Urwin.

There is no dodging the problem which religion sets for modern education. Education in Christendom used to be grounded in the Christian conception of man. To-day that conception cannot be presupposed as an agreed basis of education, and religion is therefore reduced (if it is to be taught in State schools at all) from the status of an educational

datum to equality of status with any other secular subject in an overcrowded curriculum: indeed, in practice it would be hard to maintain its footing of equality with subjects of proved secular importance. The provisions of the Education Act defy the facts. The R.P.A. proposes a programme based on the facts. Religion has played too big a part in the human story to be left out of school-teaching; and it can be made fascinating to children. But the claim of the Christian faith to be a unique revelation is highly disputable, and cannot possibly be taught in schools (without scandal) as established, or even widely accepted, truth. Therefore, it is the religious beliefs and practices of mankind which must be taught in schools.

One may accept the principle of this proposal without subscribing to the detailed programme which has been worked out. This is what Prof. Owst does. The R.P.A. is to be congratulated on getting so distinguished an educationist to contribute his views on their scheme. Prof. Owst has faith still in the lost cause of Anglican modernism, and he seems to expect too much from the programme and method of the World Congress of Faiths; but he is securely on his own firm ground when he stresses the necessity of drastic selection in the programme of comparative religion, concentrating on the religious background of western civilization, and when he asks for a positive aim to govern the teaching. Otherwise, the results could be ludicrous; the programme anyhow would be pedagogically impracticable and could stand no chance of acceptance. Surely, the principle which should rule in this matter is the principle of social anthropology, that religion is inseparable from the social complex in which it is found. It is not Christian modernism nor comparative religion which should be taught in schools, but history and geography. If religion is taught in any other way, it will be "bad history, bad philosophy, bad science, and bad religion," no less than if it is taught according to an "Agreed Syllabus." This treatment of religion in the context of history and of geography will not only rationalize religion in the past by bringing out its functional purpose, but also indicate the place of religion in the present and the future. Dr. Urwin hints at this kind of treatment, but he does not lay firm hold of it and make it the governing principle of his method.

Of course, history and geography are not new subjects (and so much the better), but they can be revised to put new sense into their treatment (or neglect) of religion; and their context is itself a measure of the relative social importance of the religious factor, and exhibits the nature and results of its interaction with other factors. Such teaching can prepare the way for the study of sociology, and for the positive social philosophy which Prof. Owst, quoting Schweitzer, thinks should inspire the teaching of religion in schools: "an affirmative attitude towards life and the universe . . . an enthusiastic devotion, inspired by optimism, to the cause of civilization." A great deal of constructive work can be done on these lines. But comparative religion is an abstract study, for those who know what they are about. To try to teach it to children requires adaptations which destroy the purpose of the science and give a false view of the subject. There cannot be a responsible policy on these lines.

TO THE READER

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